

QUARTERLY REPORT

Second Quarter 2016
To the Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee
From the Habitat Conservation Plan Administrator
July 26, 2016

Introduction:

Quarterly reports are due in January, April, July, and October of each year. Page 107 of the Habitat Conservation Plan cites what information will be included and which agency or entity (Washington County, USFWS, BLM, UDNR, & Ivins) will provide it.

The first segment of this Quarterly Report deals with general items not associated with clearing and removing tortoises while the latter half will provide details on these and related items.

RESERVE MANAGEMENT

Administration:

- HCP staff participated in meetings with the Quad State Organization.
- HCP staff participated in meetings with the Management Oversight Group (MOG).
- HCP staff has worked with BLM to issue and administer contracts for Long Valley Land Exchange EA and associated cultural mitigation contracts in fulfillment of Land Acquisition efforts.
- HCP staff hired an intern to help maintain the Agricultural Research Service experimental plots at Turkey Farm and Beaver Dam Slope.
- HCP Biologist is monitoring raven nests and roost sites in search of tortoise remains.
- The previous HCP Administrator (Bob Sandberg) retired and there was a new Administrator (Lynn Chamberlain) hired this quarter.

Fire Management:

- HCP staff continued to work with and support the DWR and Agricultural Research Service in their study of restoration methods and adapted plant species at the

Turkey Farm.

- HCP staff continued its involvement with the Lower Virgin River Fire Council, Washington County Emergency Management, and County Fire Warden to stay coordinated on fire related issues.

Utility Projects

- HCP staff monitored ongoing well repair work in St. George and Washington cities.
- A new well site was approved by the TC and HCAC in upper Mill Creek.
- HCP staff surveyed and moved two juvenile tortoises for regular maintenance of the Ivins City detention basin

TORTOISE CLEARANCES, MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT

Clearances/Surveys Requested:

- Green Valley – The Lakes Development
- Hurricane City – Zion Village Development
- Mile marker 5 to Arizona state line HWY 91 – UDOT
- Proposed Purgatory Road – Hurricane City

Surveys Conducted:

- Green Valley – The Lakes Development
- Hurricane City – Zion Village Development
- Mile marker 5 to Arizona state line HWY 91 – UDOT
- Proposed Purgatory Road – Hurricane City

Removals Conducted:

- Green Valley – The Lakes Development (5 desert tortoises removed/relocated)

Take animals:

- Staff processed 21 tortoises during the quarter.
- There were 7 tortoises returned to the Reserve.
- There were 5 tortoises removed from the Green Valley Clearance (2 were released and 3 are awaiting fence construction before being released in the fall).
- There were 5 captive tortoise recovered during the quarter.
- There were 4 untested take animals at the TCF as of June 30th.

*Attached is a report showing all tortoises processed or handled by HCP staff during the quarter.

Blood Work:

- There were 7 tortoises tested during the 2nd quarter.
ELISA Positive: 6

ELISA Negative: 0
ELISA Suspect: 1

Translocation:

- There were no tortoises translocated during the 2nd quarter.

Adoption & Captive Tortoises:

- There were 10 tortoises placed in the DWR adoption program during the quarter.
- As of 06/30/15 there were no tortoises awaiting adoption at the TCF.

EDUCATION

Outreach and Education:

- Staff made 15 presentations to 1,185 people during the 2nd quarter.
- Staff completed 3 Tortoise Awareness Training classes for 57 people. These trainings were St. George City well contractors, a Mall Drive project, and a Snow Canyon water project.
- Staff created an ad that was placed in the Southern Utah Family and Kids magazine.
- A 6 week promotional pre-movie ad was run in the Megaplex theaters, Hurricane Theater, and Cedar City Theater beginning March 4th that ran through the beginning of the second quarter.
- Staff spoke with radio regarding an ad that will be placed on two different stations this fall.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Trail stewards:

- We currently have 27 active trail stewards operating on the ground. This quarter the volunteers donated a total of 287 hours of time on trail monitoring, trail maintenance, and visitor contact within the Reserve. They documented 93 visits in reporting their work and observations. They monitored 65 trails or areas during the quarter. Zones 1-4 of the Reserve were visited during the quarter by trail stewards.
- Missing trail signs on the Owen's Loop, Paradise Rim, Gecko, and Arch trails continue to create problems for visitors who are new to the area. Major remediation of the long-standing washout on the Chuckwalla trail has eliminated a significant safety hazard for hikers, bikers, and equestrians using the trail. The work done was excellent.

Additional Volunteer Work:

- During the quarter, 24 hours of steward training and 60 hours of trail steward volunteer program administration were contributed. Total volunteer time for the quarter amounts to 371 hours.

Signage:

- The biologist installed new signs or improved signage at Dino Cliffs, Pioneer Hills, Pioneer Rim, Lava Ridge, and Brook's Nature Trail.

Human Impact Monitoring:

- None

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- During the first quarter, Washington County deputies made 428 vehicle contacts, 194 person contacts, issued 2 citations, and 9 warnings.
- All of the warnings were for dogs off leash or parking/vehicle violations.
- HCP staff met with law enforcement personnel in the scheduled quarterly meeting to review activities and patrols in the Reserve.
- HCP staff reported 3 illegal camps north of St. George to local law enforcement officers.
- Sheriff's department detailed report is attached.

FENCING

Boundary Surveys completed:

- None

Fence Constructed:

- None

Planned Fencing:

- Ledges West boundary fencing

Vandalism:

- There were 6 occurrences of cutting the fence or damaging stepovers and gates. All issues were repaired.

Maintenance:

- Maintenance is an ongoing issue created from sources such as washouts from heavy rain storms or vandalism as noted above.

RESERVE ACQUISITIONS/BOUNDARY ISSUES

Section 6 Acquisitions:

- The HCP staff applied for ESMF funding and DWR will apply for USFWS Section 6 Land Acquisition Funding. That application is still moving through the process.

BLM Acquisitions:

- BLM was awarded Sportsman's and Recreation Access Land and Water conservation funds to purchase the Babylon property.
- The Long Valley Exchange is moving forward as there has been an agreement signed between Washington County and Bob Brennan. HCP staff is working with the BLM to put out a request for proposals for mitigation on both the historical and pre historical cultural sites on the Long Valley exchange parcel.

Boundary Issues:

- An issue of conflicting surveys on the boundary of the Reserve in Ivins at the Palisades development is an ongoing discussion.

RESERVE MONITORING

- HCP Biologist and intern are working on raven nest monitoring.
- DWR is working to complete the report of the monitoring done in 2015.

OTHER SPECIES

- Staff picked up 2 Gila monsters; one was released and one was given to DWR for relocation.
- Staff released 2 Golden Eagles, 9 Cooper's Hawks, 2 Barn Owls, and 1 Great Horned Owl.

Attached reports:

HCP Staff Training
Tortoises processed by HCP Staff
Outreach and education presentations
Tortoise awareness training provided
Trail steward volunteers
WCSO quarterly summary
UDWR report